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CAUSE NO. 3:22cv734-DPJ-HSO-LHS  
WITNESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK: SHONE POWELL

FEB 26 2024

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI  
Candice Gene, REPORTER

**STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE**  
**Public Hearing on 08/06/2021**

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**TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO-RECORDED**  
**PUBLIC HEARING OF THE**  
**STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE**  
**AUGUST 6, 2021**  
**TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI**

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1 MR. BECKETT: -- actually start our meeting. And  
2 so, uh, my name is Jim Beckett and I'm the chairman of  
3 the Committee and I just wanted to mention these  
4 things before we get started.

5 The joint Committee is going to hold these public  
6 hearings to receive suggestions and recommendations on  
7 how the -- how the Mississippi legislature should  
8 redistrict itself and its four congressional  
9 districts.

10 During the course of this hearing, we'll chair --  
11 the chair will offer members of the public the  
12 opportunity to, uh, to give their comments to the  
13 Committee or to give statements to the Committee of  
14 our upcoming redistricting efforts.

15 Um, by custom, we try to give members of the  
16 public a free opportunity to say what they wish. In  
17 cases where it appears there are going to be many  
18 persons who want to speak, we do -- we do limit their  
19 time.

20 Um, as to what limits we pose will be up -- up to  
21 this chair depending on how many persons want to  
22 speak. And so, um, at this time, since we are just a  
23 few minutes past, uh, 6:00 o'clock, um, as -- as -- as  
24 chair of this Committee, I'll -- I'll call the public  
25 hearing of the Joint Reapportionment Committee, Joint

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1 Congressional Redistricting Committee to order.

2 Um, and ask our counsel if you will call the role  
3 of the members present. And excuse me, before that, I  
4 would -- because this is being, uh, streamed across  
5 the state, and I understand that lots of times, people  
6 have a hard time identifying the members, if you would  
7 raise your hand or identify yourself as your name is  
8 called for those who are watching. I'd appreciate  
9 that.

10 COUNSEL: Representative Beckett.

11 MR. BECKETT: Here.

12 COUNSEL: Representative Blackmon. Representative  
13 Brown, Representative Eubanks, Representative Ford.

14 MR. FORD: Here.

15 COUNSEL: Representative Mangold, Representative  
16 Read, Representative Shanks, Representative Taylor.

17 MR. TAYLOR: Here.

18 COUNSEL: Representative White. From the Senate,  
19 Senator Kirk.

20 MR. KIRK: Here.

21 COUNSEL: Senator Bryan.

22 MR. BRYAN: Here.

23 COUNSEL: Senator DeBar, Senator Hawkins, Senator  
24 Hopson, Senator Parker, Senator Simmons, Senator Tate.

25 MR. TATE: Here.

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1 COUNSEL: Senator Turner-Ford, Senator Wiggins.

2 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you. Uh, I just  
3 want to remind you, number one, that -- that this is  
4 not a meeting that requires a quorum. We are simply,  
5 uh, calling the roll so that we may identify those who  
6 were present at -- at the meeting.

7 And, um, so, uh, the, uh, I don't think we've had  
8 any members that have come in after that was called.  
9 So moving on, I would additionally, we'd like to  
10 recognize, um, any of our members who might be here  
11 tonight that are on the Committee.

12 I believe Representative Thompson and -- and --  
13 and is -- is anyone else here that I did not see come  
14 in? Thank you Bruce, for coming.

15 And, uh, I don't believe -- is there anyone from  
16 -- from the college that would, uh, care to make any  
17 type of statement or anything?

18 Uh, I do thank them for allowing us to use their  
19 facilities and the arrangements that have -- that have  
20 been made and, um, you know, it and I want to pay  
21 special attention to the fact that our staff is here,  
22 both of our LBO staff and -- and -- and our PEER  
23 Committee, those who are -- who are helping us with  
24 the scheduling of and videotaping this meeting so that  
25 people who aren't present may be able to watch the

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1 meetings.

2 And so that --that doesn't just happen. Somebody  
3 has to do all that work, and, uh, these -- these  
4 employees of LBO and PEER have done that.

5 And in addition to that, as we go forward, uh,  
6 our members from the -- from the PEER Committee, Ted .  
7 Booth and Benning Collins and -- and Martin are going  
8 to have to do a lot of work and put up with Benning  
9 and I and the entire Committee through a lot of  
10 questions and going to help us an awful lot as we --  
11 as we move forward, especially with the technical  
12 assistance [inaudible] and providers.

13 Not -- not only do they know the law and the  
14 requirements as far as redistricting, but there's  
15 going to be an awful lot of, uh, technology involved  
16 and we appreciate -- we appreciate their efforts.

17 Uh, at this -- at this time, if there's anyone on  
18 the Committee that would, uh, like to make a statement  
19 or anything, I'd like to give them opportunity to say  
20 anything.

21 MR. KIRBY: I will make it if I may Mr. Chairman.  
22 First off, we have several that of the [inaudible]  
23 that are watching.

24 Uh, you know, as an example, like Senator  
25 Wiggins, it's a long way from Pascagoula to here, and

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1 so he's watching this, and we have, uh, like Senator  
2 Turner-Ford, who is, uh, having other meetings that  
3 she's a chairman of, can't be here.

4 And then I've had several Senators that aren't on  
5 the Committee even saying they were watching, uh, like  
6 and some that are as well, Senator Simmons, Derrick  
7 Simmons is watching and Senator Parker, Hopson and  
8 Harkins, and Senator DeBar, has been ill.

9 So, that's, uh, I want to let you know that it's  
10 just a long ways for some of them and others had other  
11 Committee meetings in which they had to attend. But  
12 they're all trying to watch and plus, uh, even Senator  
13 Frazier has made the comment that he's going to watch  
14 each and every one of these.

15 And -- and, uh, most importantly is our  
16 lieutenant governor who sends his regards and also,  
17 uh, uh, is deeply involved in this as you know, and is  
18 watching, as he did last night, and will all the  
19 others.

20 So, uh, we're here, and my -- my comment really  
21 is just to say that we're here for one purpose mainly  
22 and that's to listen to you guys and for you to tell  
23 us anything that we can do to improve, uh, the way  
24 that we do reapportionment. So thank you.

25 MR. BECKETT: All right. Is there anyone else

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1 that would have a comment they want to make?

2 All right. Thank you for that, Senator Kirby. Uh,  
3 in preparation for this meeting, um, the staff has  
4 graciously gone back through the transcripts of -- of  
5 our previous meetings.

6 As you know, every 10 years, we do this and so  
7 they -- they went through and kind of looked at some  
8 of the concerns and questions that have been asked in  
9 the past and in anticipation that some of those same  
10 things will be issues that -- that people will want  
11 to talk about this year are and so, uh, I'm going to  
12 discuss a few of those right now.

13 First and hopefully that will provide a little  
14 information to the public and it -- it might answer a  
15 question that someone had either here or somewhere  
16 else. Occasionally, we're going to do some things  
17 that -- that might seem kind of odd to those here. I  
18 may have to repeat some things and do some things.

19 But just remember that not only do we have the  
20 people that are here in the room tonight. But we're  
21 doing this for -- for many other people that are  
22 watching it at other -- other locations.

23 So, something that might be easier to understand  
24 or an address or something like that that you could  
25 come and ask me about. I'm going to try to be clear



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1 for those who are watching that might get that.

2 But, uh, you know, those -- those things that --  
3 that we would definitely will want to cover that have  
4 been covered in the past, you know, questions like why  
5 do we -- why do we redistrict?

6 Why do we go through this exercise every 10 --  
7 every 10 years where -- where a great deal of time and  
8 effort both by the members of this Committee, but --  
9 but an awful lot of time and effort by -- by staff and  
10 -- and those others.

11 You know, people would think, well you just draw  
12 a district and -- and [inaudible] but we redistrict  
13 because, um, we're required to both by the federal --  
14 the federal constitution requires that one person, one  
15 vote requirement.

16 Uh, and that causes us to redistrict, uh, both  
17 our congressional -- congressional districts and our  
18 legislative districts every 10 years following --  
19 following the census. We have to -- we have to do that  
20 because our -- our population shifts around the state.

21 Additionally, Section 254 of our constitution of  
22 1890 requires that we redistrict the legislature. So,  
23 we don't have any choice but to redistrict and we do  
24 that every 10 years after the census.

25 The next question will be when will -- when will

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1 that commence? When will we start redistricting? And I  
2 -- I want you all to know that that has started now.  
3 That started really officially with an organizational  
4 meeting that we had back in -- in July, but -- but it  
5 really started last, in earnest, the first meeting  
6 last night, was in Meridian.

7 We had a summer public hearing in Meridian, and  
8 this is the beginning of the process. We're nowhere  
9 near the end of the process. Uh, we are just starting  
10 the first -- the first set of data, uh, because of the  
11 delays in the census this time.

12 The actual numbers, uh, we have -- we don't have  
13 and so, uh, because of qualifying deadlines next year,  
14 our -- our, um, it's [inaudible] but because of  
15 qualifying deadlines next year, our efforts at  
16 congressional redistricting will come first, and, uh,  
17 will occur during the fall.

18 We --we don't even have the actual data yet. We  
19 just have some preliminary estimates. We'll be  
20 receiving the data coming, but our -- our  
21 congressional candidates will need to qualify at the  
22 first of the year.

23 So, we're going to draw -- we'll be attempting to  
24 draw their districts first, and that's what we'll be  
25 working on first once we get the data.

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1 And, you know, that will occur in the fall of  
2 this year and then we will be -- we will be working on  
3 our legislative districts the, uh, the months of the  
4 2022 legislative session, because we won't be running  
5 until the following year. So we have a little more  
6 time to do those.

7 Um, you know, so because of shifts of  
8 populations, um, we face challenges and you can see  
9 that, um, if you'll look at the maps around the room  
10 here, it shows what the population was in 2010 and the  
11 counties and it shows what the estimated population is  
12 going to be in 2020.

13 Now, like I said, those are not the official  
14 numbers and not precinct by precinct numbers, but  
15 they're the latest estimates we -- that we have. Um,  
16 you'll see that some counties gained population and  
17 other -- other counties lost -- lost populations.

18 You know, they'll be some -- some tailoring in  
19 some areas when we go into these public hearings and  
20 some areas, uh, all the counties in that area where we  
21 lost population.

22 When we go to do these histories -- in some other  
23 areas, like, uh, um, the coast, DeSoto County, you'll  
24 see large increases in population.

25 In this particular area here, you have both

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1 counties that have gained population and counties that  
2 have lost -- lost population, some of them have some  
3 fairly decent gains and -- and some losses.

4 But -- but each one of those presents challenges  
5 in places, you know, like I said places like Natchez  
6 and Meridian, uh, we lost population and that's one  
7 set of problems, but each of these population shifts  
8 creates challenges for us.

9 Um, the -- the exhibits, uh, will also tell the  
10 ideal size for House district. The ideal size for  
11 House district is 24,273 people. And that can be --  
12 you can plus or minus 5,000 people.

13 So, it will range from 23,000, a little over  
14 23,000 to about 25,500. Uh, every -- the Senate ideal  
15 size is 56,948, with the same type of deviation. So,  
16 it's going to range from around 54,000 to almost  
17 60,000.

18 So, there is a little room in the House and the  
19 Senate districts for some deviation, but, uh, that's  
20 basically the same size as 2010, just a little bit  
21 smaller deviation. But our population is so close,  
22 there's not -- not much of a change.

23 But whether your population is up in your area or  
24 down in your area, there's -- both will create a  
25 challenge.

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1 Um, you know, why are we presenting census  
2 estimates at this meeting? And that's simply because  
3 of the delays in producing the census data, the actual  
4 numbers we used in the redistrict are not available  
5 yet.

6 Uh, the first set of data will be available in  
7 mid-August, uh, with a final and official delivery  
8 occurring at the close of September.

9 The census estimates give us a good indication of  
10 where our challenges are and -- and -- and have been  
11 used in the past hearings to -- to assist the public  
12 in understanding the issues facing your redistricting.

13 So you can look and tell whether your area of the  
14 state is growing or not. You know, we're -- we're  
15 going to have the same number of House members, the  
16 same number of senators, uh, and so you got -- you got  
17 to adjust -- adjust their size basically.

18 You know how -- and the, uh, how many members --  
19 how many members of the public participated in the  
20 process? And there's several ways that members of the  
21 public can participate in this process.

22 Uh, by discussing your concerns at his hearing,  
23 uh, we are here to hear your concerns. This evening we  
24 will listen to any matter that you wish to bring to  
25 our attention about how and where we will draw

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1 congressional and legislative districts.

2 We can let members of the public know they must  
3 sign a card. So, if you -- in order to speak, you need  
4 to -- you need to sign a card, sign it and they'll  
5 give it to me and let me -- let me so I can call on  
6 you.

7 You can submit any suggestions to the Committee  
8 in writing, or by email. Uh, by taking advantage of  
9 the opportunities to use --to use the Committee's  
10 public access computer terminals, which we'll have  
11 available in Jackson.

12 Uh, you know, in a hearing, you know, you might  
13 ask what kinds of concerns does the Committee need to  
14 hear from the public and I can just tell you that  
15 basically, we're here to hear any -- what's on your  
16 mind. We've -- that's just the simplest answer.

17 In the past, we've heard things about voting --  
18 voting rights act concerns, splitting of precincts,  
19 uh, splitting of municipalities, uh, districts that  
20 are just odd-shaped. In short, we've heard just about  
21 anything as members that -- that you're probably going  
22 to mention, been -- a concern has been mentioned to  
23 us.

24 Uh, just want to remind you that the rules of the  
25 House governing joint committee meetings so we will

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1 handle such matters as the House would handle them.  
2 You know, and how can members of the public contact  
3 the Committee to provide information or to book time  
4 on the public access computer?

5 So, members of the public should be advised to  
6 send US mail to Ted Booth, Staff Counsel, Joint  
7 Reapportionment Committee. PO Box 1204, Jackson,  
8 Mississippi, 39215-1204, or you can send an email to  
9 ted.booth@pper.ms.gov. That's ted.booth@PEER.ms.gov.

10 And so please provide the information for staff  
11 to follow up, such as email address and telephone  
12 numbers, because in order for us to get back with you,  
13 that's -- we're going to -- we're going to need that.

14 Uh, in public access, our congressional  
15 redistricting will commence following the delivery of  
16 the Final PL 94-171 data, which should arrive at the  
17 close of September.

18 The public access for time will last for three  
19 weeks from the receipt of that information. For the  
20 legislature -- for the legislative districts, it will  
21 occur after January 1, 2020 and last for three weeks.

22 And one thing I want to mention and I didn't, I  
23 said we have a tolerance for our Mississippi  
24 legislative districts.

25 Basically, we have a zero tolerance for our four

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1 congressional districts and I want to mention that  
2 they're different from us. You're going to see, uh,  
3 you're going to have to see -- you're going to see  
4 counties split or you're going to see -- you may see  
5 precincts split.

6 You're going to see -- see that and it's because  
7 we won't have any choice because the law requires  
8 there not be any -- any type of tolerance on that. Uh,  
9 and that's all I have. Before I -- I think Senator  
10 McMahan came in.

11 MALE: He did.

12 MR. BECKETT: I want to recognize Senator. We're  
13 glad to have you and is there --

14 [inaudible]

15 MR. BECKETT: Yeah, and we're -- we're pretty --  
16 we're, uh, uh, PEER is spelled p-e-e-r, if anyone is -  
17 - is -- is concerned about that. I know that sometimes  
18 we live in a world of acronyms and -- and you can get  
19 confused sometimes by who you're talking with. Uh, and  
20 that's what I have.

21 Is there anyone on the committee who have  
22 anything else they want to add before we open this up  
23 to the public?

24 MR. TATE: I would just like to say there were  
25 handouts uh, when you walked in and good summary



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1 everything that he just said right there on the back  
2 of it. So, if you didn't get a phone number or PO box  
3 or anything, they're all in the back of those  
4 handouts.

5 MR. BECKETT: Right. I thank you, Senator Tate.  
6 All right. You know, just one more time. I want to let  
7 you know that if you would like to ask a question, if  
8 you'll just let the staff know, they will be happy to  
9 -- to hand you a card so that you can turn that in.

10 And once again, we ask that if you didn't sign in  
11 when you came in, to please do that because we would  
12 like to have a record of everyone that's here. Uh and  
13 if there's not anything else, uh, I'm just going to  
14 call on the -- the first person. Uh, Mr. Charles  
15 Moore, uh, if you would go to the podium please so  
16 they can get you on camera.

17 MR. MOORE: Thank you. My name is Charles Moore.  
18 Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you guys for all  
19 your hard work that you do in governing our great  
20 state of Mississippi.

21 But we know that there's always work to be done  
22 and doing it in a way that it benefits all of us and  
23 the entire state permits growth and unity, health and  
24 all those other things that we need here in  
25 Mississippi.

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1 And it's up on the hands of you guys just as well  
2 as us as the constituents and also us plain people.  
3 I'd like to read this to you here, uh, and you have a  
4 copy there as well.

5 Civic Engagement Roundtable Tupelo Statement to  
6 Mississippi Joint Legislative Redistricting Committee  
7 from Mississippi Civic Engagement Roundtable,  
8 Mississippi State Conference NAACP, One Voice and  
9 NAACP Lee County Branch. Political appointment,  
10 concerns in Lee County, Alcorn, Chickasaw, Clay,  
11 Lowndes, Monroe and Prince Counties.

12 The process of redistricting is a critical  
13 component of a citizen's political right to have a say  
14 in who represents them at local, state and federal  
15 levels. Although the process of drawing maps is a very  
16 technical skill that very few can master, everyone has  
17 a right to express how these boundaries affect their  
18 lives.

19 Voter suppression continues to be a major issue  
20 in Mississippi. Barriers to voting, as well as the  
21 lack of political representation are avenues to the  
22 disenfranchisement of citizens.

23 My organization along with the Mississippi Civic  
24 Engagement Roundtable have documented years of voter  
25 suppression, tactics that have led to considerable

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1 amount of mistrust in voting systems. Mississippi  
2 remains at the bottom of the nation for the lack of  
3 access that it provides to citizens for voting.

4 Antiquated systems, such as the lack of online  
5 voter registration, lack of early voting programs, and  
6 an absentee voting system that requires notarization  
7 of the application and ballot.

8 The COVID-19 pandemic made these issues even  
9 worse. Many states implemented ballot drop --ballot  
10 drop programs and other efforts to ensure the safety  
11 of both voters and election officials.

12 Mississippi could have used this urgent health  
13 crisis to raise -- I'm sorry, to raise the occasion  
14 and put the health of its citizens first, but we did  
15 not. Instead, we passed legislation allowing  
16 individuals who contracted the virus or were  
17 caregivers to use this as an excuse to vote by  
18 absentee ballot.

19 This caused more confusion for citizens and  
20 election workers who then had to put their own health  
21 at risk to provide ballots for individuals with the  
22 virus. This is voter suppression. Incidents like these  
23 continue to display themselves in various forms that  
24 make it more difficult for people to vote.

25 Among the top of the list of those concerns are

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1 voter purging, confusion regarding polling places and  
2 the lack of adequate election equipment.

3 Citizens of Lee County continue to witness these  
4 incidents of voter suppression. During every election  
5 cycle, citizens are purged off of voter rolls, denied  
6 ballots when presenting the proper ID and sent to  
7 different voting precincts.

8 We deserve a fair voting process that's handled  
9 with integrity. The development of fair, political  
10 boundaries at the local, state, and federal level can  
11 help us to improve our election process by developing  
12 districts that keep our communities together and are -  
13 - and are transparent.

14 Thank you for your consideration. I would also  
15 like to add that in making these decisions, I would  
16 encourage each and every official -- elected official,  
17 and by the way should I said paid elected official.  
18 This government is for the people, by the people and  
19 of the people. I pray that we will not make it based  
20 on partisanship, based on our friends or our buddies  
21 or based on our financial status but based on how we  
22 want Mississippi to grow.

23 God bless you and thank you.

24 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you. Uh, next Mr.  
25 Charles Pensa.

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1 MR. PITTSO: Good evening, honorable state  
2 senators and representatives, all my fellow citizens  
3 here in this great state of Mississippi. My name is  
4 Charles Pensa and I'm here as a citizen of Lee County.

5 Uh, and I would like to share just a little  
6 historical significance for the record, uh, in that,  
7 uh, we are proud that a minority has been elected in  
8 this area. Um, never in the history of the state of  
9 Mississippi has this area had a state elected  
10 official, uh, of minority status. Uh, it's been a -- a  
11 struggle.

12 Uh, the last time I can recollect a statewide  
13 minority, uh, being elected to office was Hiram Revels  
14 during reconstruction.

15 So, uh, we have a long way to go, although we  
16 have a large percentage of population that are  
17 minorities, as I was looking over the census data, uh,  
18 even here in Lee County, uh, we have almost 35 percent  
19 minorities.

20 And keep in mind, Lee County is one of those, uh,  
21 counties that experienced some growth, minute, I would  
22 agree, but we did experience some growth. And in  
23 Mississippi, we've had a problem of people leaving our  
24 state, as opposed to coming to our state.

25 And, uh, one of the -- the things is because of

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1 our reputation. Uh, I would, uh, encourage the state  
2 legislative redistricting committee in your  
3 deliberations at this time, to uphold the one man one  
4 vote rule.

5 Uh, it's been a struggle and I was a part of that  
6 struggle in gaining representation for the minority,  
7 uh, community right here in Lee County, having to take  
8 part in a -- in a suit actually against one of our  
9 government entities, uh, because, uh, of the dilution  
10 of minority voting strengths.

11 Some of you may be recall, um, we had in our city  
12 of Tupelo, 10 elected officials and of that 10, only  
13 one was a minority. And we had over 20 percent of the  
14 population at that time.

15 We ended up having to go to court and the result  
16 was some of you lawyers may remember the Jingle case.

17 Well, that came out about six months before our  
18 case and the federal judge ruled in our favor, um,  
19 that we had three, uh, city-wide elected officials and  
20 seven ward council people. And, uh, because of the  
21 makeup of government, uh, minorities were, uh, had a  
22 difficult time in electing, uh, the candidate of their  
23 choice.

24 And, uh, the ruling was that we would eliminate  
25 the two at large council people and of the seven

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1 remaining wards, that we would, uh, redistrict and  
2 create a second minority-majority district.

3 Uh, I hope that we don't have to go through that  
4 kind of a process in the state of Mississippi ever  
5 again, uh, to protect the voting rights of minority  
6 citizens and I would implore you to hold uppermost in  
7 your mind one man or woman, one vote. God bless you.

8 MR. BECKETT: Thank you so much. All right. Uh,  
9 Amanda Hughes.

10 MS. HUGHES: I have not comment.

11 MR. BECKETT: Okay. All right. Teresa Roberts.

12 MS. ROBERTS: Good evening to each of you. Uh,  
13 first, I want to say thank you for taking the time,  
14 uh, to be here, to, uh, listen to our requests and let  
15 them be known.

16 I've heard, uh, both my professional colleague  
17 president of the NAACP, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Charles  
18 Pensa, who's chairperson of the Get Out the Vote  
19 Coalition. So, I won't repeat anything hopefully that  
20 they said. So, the trajectory of my plea is going to  
21 be a little different.

22 Uh, when I look at this sheet right here, I see  
23 more negative than gains. Over three-quarters  
24 [inaudible] I counted them, they're negative, and why  
25 is that?

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1           Why are people leaving? Where are they going?  
2           Why? Reputation. Mississippi has a reputation that  
3           it's not tasteful because of unjust treatment. We  
4           can't get people to come to Mississippi if we keep  
5           reputations that it's not tasteful.

6           Now, it says, on this piece of paper that the  
7           Mississippi state legislation and the governor decide  
8           the boundaries of the district maps. I'm asking that  
9           you search your heart when you decide on the  
10          boundaries.

11          Don't let it be for personal gains, don't let it  
12          be for a partisanship. Do what's right, because the  
13          old people that I used to listen to they say when you  
14          dig ditches, dig two because you're going to fall.

15          Now, Mississippi, we have been falling. We're not  
16          doing right. Every person deserves a right to have  
17          voting rights and to do them equally without problems  
18          or harassment or whatever the case may be to prevent  
19          them from voting.

20          Everybody should have the right to vote, it's a  
21          constitutional right. So, please I'm asking you  
22          consider what you do, think about it. I like to sleep  
23          at night and I like to sleep in peace. You ought to  
24          want to do the same thing in peace. So people, please,  
25          our plea is just do what's right. Thank you.



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1           MR. BECKETT: Thank you. All right. I don't have  
2 anyone else who has turned in the card saying they  
3 would like to make a comment. Is there anyone else who  
4 would like to make a comment? Do you --

5           MS. JONES: I would like to make a comment.

6           MR. BECKETT: Okay.

7           MALE: I'm sorry. What's your -- what's your last  
8 name?

9           MS. JONES: Jones.

10          MALE: All right. Ms. Jones, please.

11          MS. JONES: Good afternoon. To the Mississippi  
12 Jointly Legislative Redistricting Committee. Thank  
13 you for the opportunity to address this Joint  
14 Legislative Redistricting Committee.

15          As a first-time councilwoman, I have -- I have  
16 been excited to learn the political process here in  
17 Lee County. It has taken a long time for the poor, the  
18 black, and the brown citizens to create communities of  
19 interest that truly represent our need. We want to  
20 ensure that the political boundaries and the district  
21 are fair, transparent and keep -- keep our communities  
22 together.

23          We are all anticipating the release of the census  
24 data soon. Although it is uncertain what the final  
25 numbers will be, we know that collecting census data

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1 during the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic was  
2 extremely challenging.

3 It is our sincere hope that any population shifts  
4 that occur will not result in the loss of  
5 representation. Although the redistricting process is  
6 a very technical process, usually handled by elected  
7 officials with attorneys and demographers [sic].  
8 It's always important to remember that within these  
9 maps are communities and within these communities are  
10 people.

11 I am committed to working with our Redistricting  
12 Committee as well as the people that I represent  
13 through this process to make sure that our maps are  
14 truly represented -- represented of our community.

15 Today marks the 56th anniversary of the passage  
16 of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. The Voting Rights  
17 Act was a tool to challenge discriminatory voting  
18 practices, like racial -- like racial mandating,  
19 strict voters ID laws, voter purges and other attempts  
20 to prevent black voters from accessing the ballot.

21 We want to continue to move forward and not go  
22 back. Thank you for your time.

23 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Marilyn Young.

24 MS. YOUNG: Good afternoon. Joint Legislative  
25 Committee, thank you all so kindly for allowing us an

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1 opportunity to speak.

2 I have been part of the redistricting process for  
3 over the last 20 years and this was the first time  
4 that we've noticed that the hearings were held before  
5 the census data is being released. Can you share with  
6 us why was the census -- why was the hearing held  
7 before the data is being released?

8 MR. BECKETT: Well, one thing, we could not wait  
9 any longer to have our hearings but the other thing is  
10 we have a county data and we can tell what parts of  
11 the state -- the citizens can tell what -- whether the  
12 area has gained or lost population.

13 We wouldn't have the exact districts because the  
14 districts haven't been drawn parts of the state, the  
15 citizens can tell what whether the area has gained or  
16 lost population.

17 We wouldn't have the exact districts up because  
18 the district's hadn't been grown in drawing anyway.  
19 So, even if we were showing the precinct data, uh, you  
20 know, we wouldn't have the districts anyway.

21 Uh, but the census data was delayed this time I  
22 guess some because of COVID, primarily. It was delayed  
23 two or three different times. If we had gotten it in  
24 April when we were initially supposed to get it, then  
25 we would had the data now. But it's primarily because

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1 of the delay in receipt of the data.

2 MS. YOUNG: Okay. Once the data is released, will  
3 there be other public hearings after the data is  
4 released?

5 MR. BECKETT: Well, there will be some public  
6 hearings After this data is released, there will be  
7 some data released next week. We will have some  
8 precinct data and I think they're like five scheduled  
9 after that. Something -- there are some scheduled  
10 after that.

11 MS. YOUNG: You're going to do them after the  
12 15th of August or September the 30th --

13 MR. BECKETT: There are going to be some done  
14 after the 12th of August is when we're actually hoping  
15 that we will receive that data. They'll be some done  
16 after that, yes.

17 MS. YOUNG: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. BECKETT: All right. Any comments.

19 MALE: All right. Ms. Gill?

20 MS. GILL: Firstly, I'll say a good evening to  
21 you all. I'm a newly elected official for Lee County  
22 area as well. I noted that you all put much emphasis  
23 on the fact that you'll use data based on the census  
24 bureau.

25 As an employee of the census bureau, this past

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1 year the numbers are not accurate. I mean we were  
2 assigned to go door to door but because of COVID, we  
3 did not go door to door.

4 We made phone calls, but at the end of the day, I  
5 say my data for the census bureau is not going to be  
6 tolerant. Find another way because the numbers are not  
7 going to be justifiable. I thank you for your time.

8 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Mr. Pensa, if you want  
9 to speak again. We might not have answered your  
10 question.

11 MR. PENSA: Is the Redistricting Committee going  
12 to use an outside consultant to help in the drawing of  
13 the map?

14 MR. BECKETT: Yes.

15 MR. PENSA: Can you give us that name?

16 MR. BECKETT: That hasn't been --

17 MR. PENSA: Hasn't been identified yet?

18 MR. BECKETT: No.

19 MR. PENSA: But you've accepted proposals  
20 already?

21 MR. BECKETT: No.

22 MR. PENSA: No proposals been accepted. Okay.  
23 Will you do one for the whole state or will you divide  
24 it up?

25 MR. BECKETT: One for the state.

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1 MR. PENSA: One for the state. Okay. Thank you.  
2 And we'll hear about that?

3 MR. BECKETT: Um, I mean, I'm sure that will be  
4 public.

5 MR. PENSA: Thank you.

6 [inaudible]

7 MR. BECKETT: [inaudible]

8 MR. MOORE: I know we're redistricting every 10  
9 years. We come back here every 10 years, but I would  
10 like the lines to be -- to be, uh, to be considered.  
11 We know there's gerrymandering and things that are  
12 happening as far as in our communities, that's  
13 shifting.

14 And some people are leaving the state. We  
15 understand this, uh, and moving to other places to  
16 start their lives, or to try to do better. But those  
17 that are in this state, in our local municipalities,  
18 there are things that are happening that we all are  
19 privy to.

20 We know this. There are some bad apples and we're  
21 actually moving them to certain areas and that's  
22 hurting our numbers when we come back to  
23 redistricting.

24 Uh, but in doing so, I don't think we're giving  
25 our state a fair chance at recovery and rebuilding

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1 because when we put all those people that are  
2 disenfranchised in one area, and then crime rises in  
3 those areas, and more people begin to move from these  
4 areas and many of them have left Mississippi because  
5 of it, they said things won't change.

6 So, I'm asking you to reconsider this. And as the  
7 NAACP president here in Lee County and as an activist  
8 for years before I was even a NAACP member, I've  
9 always wanted to be the change that my nation or my  
10 community needs to see.

11 I've always tried to be that change. And right  
12 now, we reach out to people and we're doing things in  
13 our community because we understand that the  
14 legislature can't do everything.

15 But your ruling and you redistricting has a lot  
16 to do with it, from our schools to our economic base  
17 to the status in which we live, you guys affect that  
18 for those on the other side of the track to those on  
19 this side of the track. You guys and your rulings and  
20 your legislation affect this.

21 It happens and so we know this -- we know that we  
22 have certain millionaires that's in here and that's in  
23 the ears of people and encouraging certain things for  
24 -- for production. But remember, if we only have a few  
25 in our state, we're not going to grow very fast.

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1 We've got to do something different in how we  
2 redistrict and why we redistrict and ways to even get  
3 those bad apples. Because if that's the weakest link  
4 in our community it will continue to destroy us. I  
5 hope you guys will take that into consideration. Thank  
6 you so much.

7 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Card is -- any other  
8 comments? Has everyone had a chance to speak?

9 All right. Uh, is there any member of the  
10 Committee have anything else they would like to say?  
11 All right. I want to once again thank our host for  
12 providing a space for us this evening.

13 Um, I want to thank the public for -- for your  
14 attendance, and for your comments, your interest in  
15 your community and your interests in redistricting. I  
16 want to thank the staff for all the work they did to  
17 get this meeting ready and to make it available to  
18 those who could not be here by live streaming it.

19 I want to remind the public that we are just  
20 beginning this process, and that, uh, you can provide  
21 us with your comments, suggestions, a proposed plan by  
22 making them once again to Ted Booth, Staff Counsel,  
23 Joint Reapportionment Committee, PO Box 1204, Jackson,  
24 Mississippi, 39215-1204, or send an email to  
25 ted.booth@PEER.ms.gov.



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1           And just thank you all for your attendance. Thank  
2   you for being here and if there's nothing further from  
3   the Committee, this meeting is adjourned.

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1

2

3 I, Chris Naaden, a transcriber, hereby declare  
4 under penalty of perjury that to the best of my  
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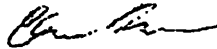
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12

13 August 12, 2021

14

15



16

Chris Naaden

17

18 (Standing Joint Congressional Redistricting Committee,  
19 Tupelo, 8-6-21)

20

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22

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## STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

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## STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

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## STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

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8/2/21

## **REDISTRICTING TOOLKIT**

The right to vote is one of the most sacred civil liberties we have as citizens. We believe voting should be easy for every citizen and that each vote should count the same.

Historically, politicians have used gerrymandering, packing and cracking to dilute the influence of Black voters during the redistricting process. We seek to ensure that the current redistricting process allows Mississippi's Black voters the same opportunities as white voters to elect their candidates of choice, regardless of where they live in the state and regardless of who they vote for.

**Redistricting is not something best left to the politicians and the experts.** Every voter has a vital stake in redistricting because it determines the composition of districts that elect public officials at every level of government.

This toolkit is designed to educate and support citizen input into the redistricting process.

---

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q: What is redistricting?**

A: Redistricting is the process of redrawing the lines of districts from which public officials are elected. Redistricting takes place after each census and affects all jurisdictions that use districts, whether for members of Congress, state legislatures, county commissions, city councils, etc. The purpose of redrawing the district maps is to rebalance the districts to reflect population changes. The principal of this is so that one person has one vote, and every vote has the same weight.

**Q: Who decides the new district maps?**

A: The Mississippi state legislature and the governor decide the boundaries of the district maps. The members of a 20-member standing committee called the Mississippi Joint



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Legislative Redistricting Committee (MJLRC) conduct the bulk of the work that create proposed boundaries. Then, members of the State House and State Senate vote on those proposed boundaries. After the majority of the State House and Senate vote to approve them, the bill is sent to the governor who can reject the boundaries or sign them into law. The committee is made up of currently serving legislators and includes the chairs and co-chairs of the House and Senate Election Committees as well as two members from each congressional district as appointed by the Speaker of the House and Lieutenant Governor.

**[Download more redistricting FAQs here.](#)**

---

## **HOW TO GET INVOLVED**

- 1) Register and ask questions during our Redistricting 101 virtual training. We'll prepare you with the information you need to ask your lawmaker the right questions.
  - Tuesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> at noon via Zoom or livestream on [Facebook.com/ACLUMississippi](https://www.facebook.com/ACLUMississippi)
  - [Register for Zoom here](#)
- 2) Organize a group and request an ACLU of Mississippi virtual training session.
  - Email Maisie Brown at [mbrown@aclu-ms.org](mailto:mbrown@aclu-ms.org) to make a request.
- 3) Attend one of nine statewide redistricting hearings held by the Mississippi Joint Legislative Redistricting Committee (MJLRC). Demand a fair and transparent redistricting process. The hearings are all scheduled to start at 6 p.m. and will be livestreamed [here](#).
  - Aug. 5: Meridian, Meridian Community College in the McCain Theater



Mississippi

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- **Aug. 6:** Tupelo, Itawamba Community College Belden Center
- **Aug. 9:** Senatobia, Northwest Community College Haraway Center
- **Aug. 11:** Itta Bena, Mississippi Valley State University William A. Butts Social Science Building
- **Aug. 12:** Starkville, Mississippi State University Hunter Henry Center
- **Aug. 16:** Natchez, Alcorn State University Business School Auditorium
- **Aug. 18:** Gulfport, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Harrison County campus Fine Arts Auditorium
- **Aug. 19:** Hattiesburg, University of Southern Mississippi Joe Paul Theater in the Thad Cochran Center
- **Aug. 23:** Jackson, Mississippi Capitol, room 216

**4) Submit comments to the Mississippi Joint Legislative Redistricting Committee.**

- The members of the MJLRC conduct the bulk of the work that create proposed maps.
- Copy [ted.booth@peer.ms.gov](mailto:ted.booth@peer.ms.gov) on all of your comment emails.

Name	District	Email	Phone	County
Rep. Jim Beckett - Co-chair (R)	23	<a href="mailto:jbeckett@hcuse.ms.gov">jbeckett@hcuse.ms.gov</a>	(662) 983-7358	Calhoun, Grenada, Lafayette, Webster
Sen. Dean Kirby - Co-chair (R)	30	<a href="mailto:dkirby@senate.ms.gov">dkirby@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-4089	Rankin
Rep. Dan Eubanks (R)	25	<a href="mailto:deubanks@house.ms.gov">deubanks@house.ms.gov</a>	(662) 374-0035	DeSoto
Rep. Edward Blackmon, Jr. (D)	57	<a href="mailto:ebblackmon@house.ms.gov">ebblackmon@house.ms.gov</a>	(601) 859-1567	Madison
Rep. Bo Brown (D)	70	<a href="mailto:bbrown@house.ms.gov">bbrown@house.ms.gov</a>	(601) 366-4774	Hinds
Rep. Kevin Ford (R)	54	<a href="mailto:kford@house.ms.gov">kford@house.ms.gov</a>	(601) 218-8185	Issaquena, Warren, Yazoo

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Rep. Vince Mangold (R)	53	<a href="mailto:vmangold@house.ms.gov">vmangold@house.ms.gov</a>	(601) 833-9155	Franklin, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Pike
Rep. John Read (R)	112	<a href="mailto:jread@house.ms.gov">jread@house.ms.gov</a>	(228) 497-3845	Jackson
Rep. Fred Shanks (R)	60	<a href="mailto:fshanks@house.ms.gov">fshanks@house.ms.gov</a>	(601) 540-0041	Rankin
Rep. Cheikh Taylor (D)	38	<a href="mailto:ctaylor@house.ms.gov">ctaylor@house.ms.gov</a>	(662) 617-8125	Clay, Lowndes, Oktibbeha
Rep. Jason White (R)	48	<a href="mailto:jwhite@house.ms.gov">jwhite@house.ms.gov</a>	(662) 289-8888	Attala, Carroll, Holmes, Leake
Sen. David Parker (R)	2	<a href="mailto:dparker@senate.ms.gov">dparker@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-4088	DeSoto
Sen. Angela Turner-Ford (D)	16	<a href="mailto:aford@senate.ms.gov">aford@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-3237	Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha
Sen. Briggs Hopson (R)	23	<a href="mailto:bhopson@senate.ms.gov">bhopson@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-3250	Issaquena, Warren, Yazoo
Sen. Derrick Simmons (D)	12	<a href="mailto:dsimmons@senate.ms.gov">dsimmons@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-2224	Bolivar, Coahoma, Washington
Sen. Josh Harkins (R)	20	<a href="mailto:jharkins@senate.ms.gov">jharkins@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-2395	Rankin
Sen. Dennis DeBar (R)	43	<a href="mailto:ddebar@senate.ms.gov">ddebar@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-3221	George, Greene, Wayne
Sen. Brice Wiggins (R)	52	<a href="mailto:bwiggins@senate.ms.gov">bwiggins@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-3237	Harrison, Jackson
Sen. Jeff Tate (R)	33	<a href="mailto:jtate@senate.ms.gov">jtate@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-2395	Clarke, Lauderdale
Sen. Hobb Bryan (D)	7	<a href="mailto:hbryan@senate.ms.gov">hbryan@senate.ms.gov</a>	(601) 359-2220	Itawamba, Lee, Monroe

5) Spread the word! Share this toolkit with your friends and family on social media! Use #FightForFairMaps so we can find and uplift your posts!

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## **QUESTIONS FOR THE MJLRC**

We strongly recommend you ask these questions to members of the Mississippi Legislative Redistricting Committee **when attending one of the nine redistricting hearings scheduled across the state.**

### **In general**

- What are your primary redistricting goals?
- What are your criteria for drawing districts and how are you weighting them?
- What are the most significant changes from the existing maps that you anticipate?

### **Data**

- Are you using total population, Voting Age Population (VAP), Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP), or something else as your base population metric?<sup>1</sup>
- Will incarcerated people be treated as residing where they are incarcerated, where they previously lived, or excluded from redistricting?

### **Transparency**

- How is this public hearing going to affect your redistricting process?
- Will you commit to making your decision-making process public?
- What different ways will the public be able to submit input? Can the public submit comments on drafts, or proposals of our own?
- How much time will be provided for public input between draft and final maps?
- Will additional hearings be held after census data is released?

### **Undue partisanship**

- How will you avoid drawing districts to favor incumbents?
- How will you make districts competitive?
- What will you do to ensure that boundaries are not drawn for a purpose of favoring or disfavoring a political party?

### **Protecting historically disenfranchised communities**

- What are you doing to ensure that communities of interest<sup>3</sup> stay intact?
- What will you do to ensure that boundaries are not drawn for purposes of favoring or discriminating against a political party or minority group?

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## **ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

**We strongly recommend you use these issues to consider when speaking at a redistricting hearing, submitting comments to legislators, and sharing on your social media.**

- The redistricting process, like much of Mississippi politics, is too secretive, done behind closed doors and ignores the needs of the public. Legislators should make the process public and transparent.
- Legislators have used redistricting throughout history to attack the right to vote and weaken the voting power of certain communities. We need redistricting in Mississippi to ensure all voters are fairly represented, regardless of their race or for whom they vote.
- During the last redistricting cycle, lawmakers used tactics to dilute the power of Black voters to pick their preferred candidates and engage in the political process. If this continues, Mississippi's legislature will be less and less representative of the state. Mississippi cannot progress until the district maps are drawn to equally represent everyone.
- Legislators should not be able to choose their own voters, making it impossible for voters to hold them accountable. Voters should choose their representatives.
- Fair district maps mean all Mississippians are ensured an equal opportunity to elect officials based on shared community interest.